

Speaking Notes

For

The Honourable Bill Blair

**President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada
and Minister of Emergency Preparedness**

Ministerial Presser: Blockades

Friday, February 18, 2022

[APG]

- Good afternoon, everyone.
- Bon après-midi tout le monde.
- Thank you for joining us here today.
- Since taking the unprecedented step of invoking the Emergencies Act on Monday, we have seen significant progress.
- Local police have successfully dismantled illegal blockades at vital ports of entry across the country and defended them from further attempts.
- We have also seen law enforcement prepare, position, and activate to end the unlawful occupation of downtown Ottawa.
- The Integrated Command Unit, led by the Ottawa Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and RCMP, has ramped up enforcement action in the past 48 hours.
- Yesterday afternoon, Interim Chief Bell announced that officers from the Ottawa Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police, the RCMP, and a number of other police agencies from across the country are now in Ottawa to assist in the effort to clear Wellington Street and restore order in the downtown core.

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- He confirmed that additional barriers and fencing have been installed, and that a secured area with security checkpoints has been established from Bronson Avenue to the Rideau Canal, and from the Queensway up to Parliament Hill.
- Any individuals seeking entry to this new secured perimeter for an unlawful reason will be denied access.
- Finally - and *importantly* - Interim Chief Bell announced that demonstrators have been clearly informed that there will be consequences for their continued unlawful conduct.
- He also made it quite clear that *action would be imminent* - and we have seen proof of that.
- But this progress, the law enforcement action we are seeing, is not cause for celebration.
- The residents of downtown Ottawa, who have had to face this invasion for three weeks, may begin to breathe a sigh of relief, but they do so cautiously.
- Every Canadian has the right to peaceful, lawful protest and assembly. We covet, protect, and defend this right, but your freedom of expression reaches its limit when it violates the rights of your fellow Canadians.

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- *And the limit has been reached.*
- These attempts to damage Canada's economy, disrupt our communities, and overthrow our democratic institutions must be responded to with nothing short of swift and unequivocal condemnation, and strong action from those with the power to respond.
- Businesses and residents in downtown Ottawa have faced serious threats, intimidation, and a great deal of harm, and for that, I apologize.
- While our measures are time-limited, we are confident that they have provided the tools, resources, and authorities that are necessary to restore peace and safety and bring things to an end.
- Thank you very much.
- Merci beaucoup.

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